



CATS INDOORS!

THE CAMPAIGN FOR SAFER BIRDS & CATS

HOW TO MAKE YOUR OUTDOOR CAT A HAPPY INDOOR CAT

Although it takes patience, an outdoor cat can be turned into a perfectly content indoor pet. The key is to make the conversion gradually and provide lots of attention and stimulation while the cat is indoors.

Cats are creatures of habit, so you must be careful to *slowly* replace your cat's old routine of going outside with the new routine of staying in. If your cat is outdoors most of the time, bring your cat inside for increasingly longer stays. Gradually shorten the length of time the cat is outside until you no longer let him or her out at all.

Substitute outside excursions with periods of special play time. Supervised trips out on the patio can also make the transition from outside to inside a little easier. Cats need human companionship to be happy, and when they spend all their time out of doors, they get very little attention. An outdoor cat may welcome the indoors if he or she gets more love, attention, and play.

Provide plenty to keep your cat occupied indoors. Provide your cat with secure cat condos which offer acceptable and interesting places to lounge, play and scratch. You should also provide scratching posts, corrugated cardboard or sisal rope for your cat to scratch and praise your cat for using them.

To encourage your ex-outdoor cat to exercise, offer interesting toys, especially those that are interactive. These usually consist of a long pole and attached line with fabric or feathers at the end of the line. Some cats enjoy searching for toys. If your cat likes to explore the house looking for "prey," hide his toys in various places so he can find them throughout the day. Be sure that the toys are not so small that they can be swallowed or get stuck in your cat's throat. Cats also enjoy ping pong balls, paper bags and cardboard boxes.

Provide your indoor cat with fresh greens. You can buy kits that include containers and seeds to grow, or plant pesticide-free alfalfa, grass, bird seed, or catnip in your own container. This way, your cat can graze safely and not destroy your house plants.

Your geographic location may affect your schedule of change; choose a good time of year to bring the cat indoors. In many parts of the country, the easiest time of year to make this conversion is prior to the cold winter months when your cat is more likely to want to be inside anyway. By the end of winter, your cat may be completely content to remain inside.

If your cat remains stubbornly committed to life outdoors, help her adjust by providing an outdoor covered enclosure or run that the cat can access through a window or pet door. Such a facility gives the cat some of the advantages of being outside while minimizing the dangers. You can make the outdoor enclosure interesting and appealing by adding objects for the cat to explore, such as tree limbs, multilevel cat condos, tires, toys hanging from branches, and boxes in which the cat can curl up or hide. You can order a *Cat Enclosure Kit* which measures 6' X 6' X 6' for \$249.95 plus postage and handling by calling toll-free: 1-888-554-PETS, or write: C & D Pet Products, 1663 Northstar Drive, Petaluma, CA 94954.

If you cannot or prefer not to offer your cat a run or enclosure, consider leash-training the cat so you can supervise her time outside. Attach the leash to a harness. Your cat may resist leash-training at first, but she will eventually accept the leash. Never leave your cat outside unsupervised while on a leash or lead.

Some cats may develop behavioral problems when they are no longer allowed outside. Most of these problems can be attributed to a change in routine that is too abrupt or lack of attention and stimulation inside. Review your steps and keep working with the cat. Be patient and continue to praise your cat when she plays with her toys, uses her scratching post, and does what she's supposed to do. If your cat becomes destructive or stops using the litter pan, consult a veterinarian or animal behaviorist to find ways to solve the problem. Remember that these symptoms can also be attributed to boredom and loneliness.

If you have just adopted a cat that stayed outdoors all the time, you should keep the cat inside from the beginning; otherwise, you run the risk of losing your cat. Using a long-range water pistol or a shake can when the cat asks to be let out is a very successful and harmless way to curb a cat from wanting to go outside. And don't forget to give your cat extra attention during the transition!

Additional tips for a happy indoor cat:

- C Trim your cat's claws every one to two weeks to keep him from damaging furniture, rugs and drapes, or glue on artificial nail caps called "Soft Paws" every six to eight weeks.
- C Provide one litter pan per cat and scoop the litter pan at least once daily. With non-clumping litter, change once or twice weekly; with clumping litter, change every two to four weeks.
- C Many cats enjoy the companionship of another cat or compatible dog of the opposite sex. If you can make the financial and emotional commitment, consider adopting another companion animal for yourself and for your cat.

Adapted from, "All Cats Should Be Indoor Cats" by Rhonda Lucas Donald, Shelter Sense, August 1990, and "From Outdoors to Indoors" by Karen Commings, Cat Fancy, September 1993.

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